

For immediate release

RIO GRANDE WATER QUALITY, IRRIGATION DISTRICT OPERATIONS ON AGENDA FOR AUGUST 4 PUBLIC MEETING

The United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) announces a public meeting of the Rio Grande Citizens' Forum at 6:30 p.m. on August 4 at USIBWC Headquarters, 4171 N. Mesa Street, Building C, El Paso, Texas. The purpose of the forum is to promote the exchange of information between the USIBWC and the community about the Commission's projects and related issues in the area.

Wayne Belzer, USIBWC Project Manager for the Texas Clean Rivers Program for the Rio Grande, will present water quality data from the Upper Rio Grande Basin. The Clean Rivers Program, operated by USIBWC under contract with the State of Texas, collects water quality data throughout the Rio Grande basin in Texas and uses the data to assess water quality issues within the basin. Belzer will discuss problems with bacteria and high salt levels in the river and future plans to address those concerns.

Belzer and officials with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality will also recognize participants in the Friends of the Rio Grande program. The Friends of the Rio Grande is a State of Texas initiative to promote environmental education and outreach in the Rio Grande basin.

El Paso County Water Improvement District #1 General Manager Jesus "Chuy" Reyes and Operations Supervisor Robert Rios will give an overview of District operations. The District covers 156 square miles of land with over 350 miles of canals and laterals in the distribution system and over 269 miles in the drainage system. The District is responsible for delivering water to over 32,727 accounts. In spite of urban growth in the City of El Paso, the irrigation of farmland for crops such as cotton, alfalfa, pecans, and chiles continues to account for the majority of water used in the District.

In other business, USIBWC staff will give an update on the Commission's Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) to analyze alternatives for managing all of the agency's flood control projects. The USIBWC has halted PEIS development in order to proceed more quickly with project-specific environmental studies for priority improvements to agency flood control projects and to resolve issues related to the USIBWC's Rio Grande Canalization Project in Southern New Mexico and West Texas.

The Rio Grande Citizens' Forum was established by the USIBWC in 1999 to facilitate the exchange of information regarding USIBWC activities on the Rio Grande between Percha Dam, NM and Fort Quitman, TX. It is designed to bring together community members, enabling the early and continued two-way flow of information, concerns, values, and needs between USIBWC and the general public, environmentalists, irrigation districts, municipalities, and others interested in the river. The International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico, is responsible for applying the boundary and water treaties between the two countries and settling differences that arise in their application.

For more information:

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RIO GRANDE CITIZENS' FORUM

Thursday, August 4, 2005

6:30 - 8:30 P.M.

International Boundary and Water Commission
4171 N. Mesa Street, The Commons, Building C
El Paso, TX

Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions - Carlos Marin, Principal Engineer and Citizens' Forum Co-Chair, USIBWC
- Friends of the Rio Grande Award Ceremony - Wayne Belzer, Clean Rivers Program Project Manager, USIBWC; Cory Horan, Clean Rivers Program Project Manager, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality; Archie Clouse, Regional Director, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
- Water Quality Update in the Upper Rio Grande Basin - Wayne Belzer, Clean Rivers Program Project Manager, USIBWC
- Overview of El Paso County Water Improvement District #1 - Jesus "Chuy" Reyes, General Manager, and Robert Rios, Operations Supervisor, EPCWID #1
- Update on Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for USIBWC Flood Control Projects - Gilbert Anaya, USIBWC
- Public Comment
- Board Discussion, Suggested Future Agenda Items

If you have a disability that you wish to self-identify confidentially that requires accommodation, please advise us ahead of time. For more information, call 915-832-4175 or e-mail sallyspener@ibwc.state.gov.